

# National **Charter School** **Resource** Center

---

at LEARNING POINT ASSOCIATES

## Welcome to the Webinar!

# Leading School Turnarounds: Competencies for Success

We will be starting soon.



The National Charter School Resource Center is funded by  
the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement  
and administered by Learning Point Associates under contract number  
ED-04-CO-0109/0004.



**LEARNING POINT**  
Associates®

# National **Charter School** **Resource** Center

---

at LEARNING POINT ASSOCIATES

## Leading School Turnarounds: Competencies for Success

June 2, 2010



The National Charter School Resource Center is funded by  
the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement  
and administered by Learning Point Associates under contract number  
ED-04-CO-0109/0004.



# About the Charter School Center

The **U.S. Department of Education** is committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating the resources critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country. To that end, the Education Department, under a contract with Learning Point Associates, has developed the **National Charter School Resource Center**.

# Presenter

## Lucy Steiner

Senior Consultant with Public Impact

# Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Steiner presentation
- Application of the competencies
- Q&A
- Wrap-up

# School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success



Lucy Steiner  
June 2010



# How do we define turnaround?

**Documented**

**Quick**

**Dramatic**

**Sustained**

**Change in the Performance of an Organization**



# Four Federal Reform Models

## Turnaround model:

Replace principal and at least half of teachers.

## Restart model:

Close school and restart it as a charter school.

## Transformation model:

Replace principal, overhaul evaluation systems and professional development, extend learning time, and create community school, operational flexibility, and comprehensive instructional programs.

## Close/Consolidate model:

Close the worst-performing schools and transfer the students to other schools with higher achievement levels.





# How is school turnaround relevant to the charter sector?

1. A district or state gives a charter school (or charter management organization) a contract to turn around a persistently low performing district school.

(Federal *Restart* model)

2. Charter school governance board decides to “turn around” a low performing charter school by replacing the school leader.

(One important component of the federal *Turnaround* and *Transformation* models)



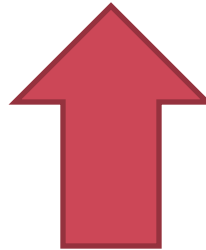
# Role of school leader

With each of these strategies, an effective school leader is critical to the success of the turnaround.



# What do we know about effective turnaround leaders?

Turnaround Leader Actions



Turnaround Leader Competencies



# What is a Competency?

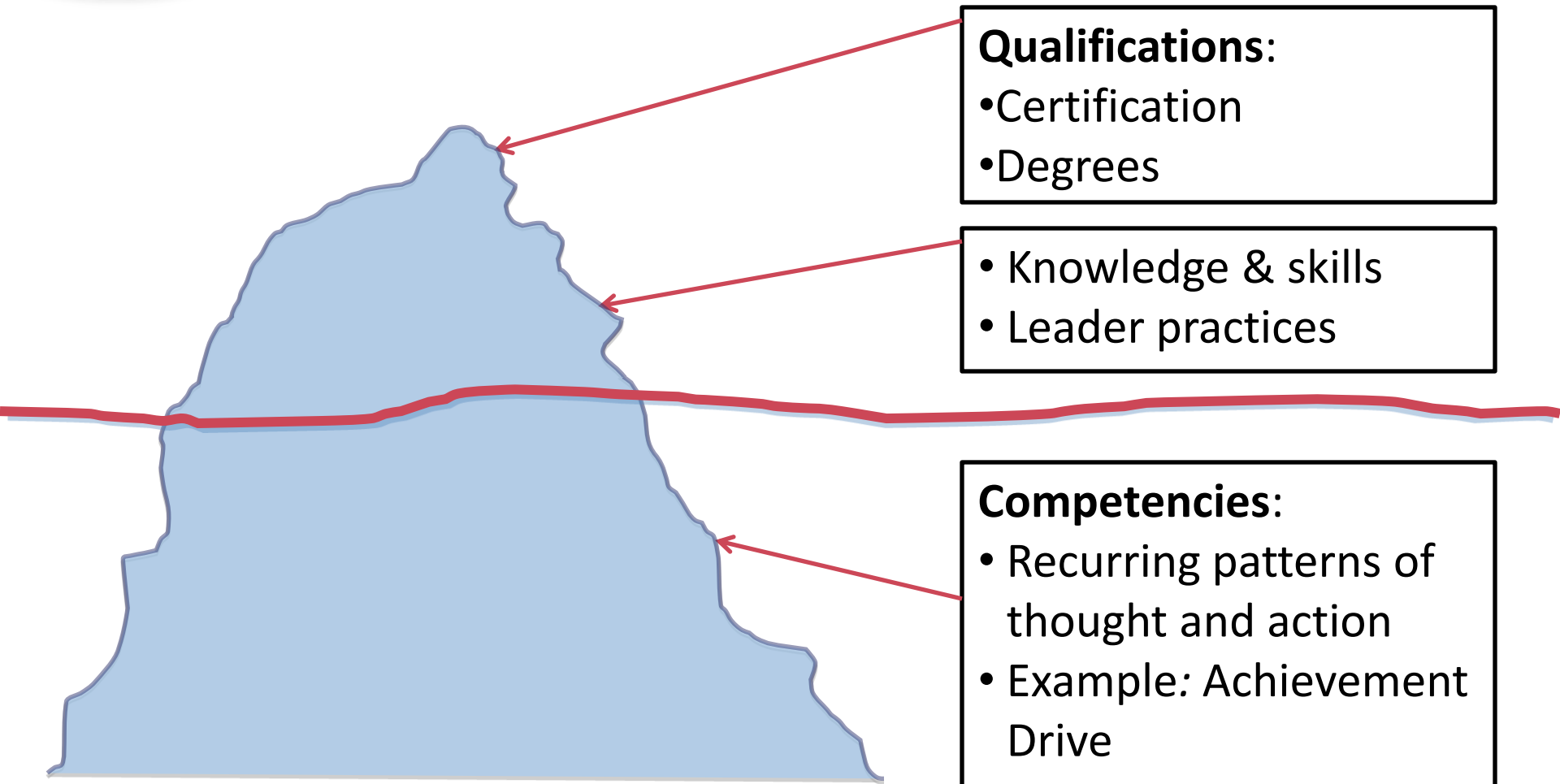
A pattern of thinking, feeling, acting or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a job or role.

- Persistence
- Self-Confidence
- Analytical Thinking
- Impact and Influence

Competencies may be developed, but are most powerful when they are used to select people who are already a good fit for the job.



# Turnaround Leader Competencies



Adapted from "The Iceberg Model" in Spencer & Spencer, *Competence at Work*, p. 11.



# Sources for Turnaround Leader Competencies

Leader actions suggest turnaround leaders are a hybrid between “manager of complex organization” and “entrepreneur.”

We examined cross industry research studies that quantify competency differences between **superior** and **average** performers.\*

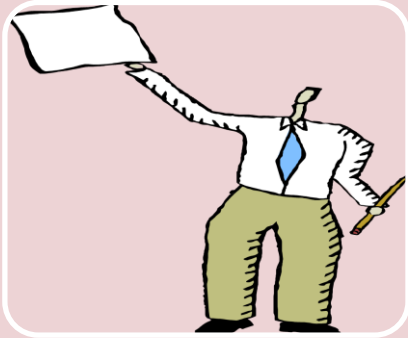
No current research specifically on turnaround school leader competencies. Clear need for future research in this area.

Several of the competencies included in this model (e.g., “Achievement” and “Impact and Influence”) are critical in most leadership positions.

\*See especially *Competence at Work*, Spencer and Spencer (1993).



# Turnaround Leader Competencies



Leader  
A



Leader  
B



# Turnaround Leader Competencies

Driving for  
Results

Influencing for  
Results

Problem  
Solving

Showing  
Confidence to  
Lead





# Driving for Results

## Achievement

- Achieve outstanding results quickly
- Set ambitious goals

## Initiative and Persistence

- Persist in the face of numerous obstacles
- Have an exceptional drive to succeed

## Monitoring and Directiveness

- Clarify expectations of others and check to ensure follow-through

## Planning Ahead

- Prioritize and plan activities to get highest benefit relative to inputs



# Driving for Results

“Roger was a take-charge kind of leader ... with a single-minded goal of bringing scores up,” she recalls. “He reminded me of my own father, who was in the military: ‘You’re going to do it my way, or the highway.’ ....He was a “very strong, no-nonsense leader” with clear expectations. “He never said ‘if you don’t want to do this, leave.’ But, we all knew if we weren’t going to, then we needed to move on somewhere else,” says Jackson. Although about a third of the staff turned over when LeBlanc arrived, the remaining faculty didn’t balk at the new regime. <sup>1</sup>

LeBlanc went door to door in the neighborhood—“pounding the pavement and being visible”—so parents had a face to attach to the school. And, he showed up regularly at local community centers and churches.<sup>2</sup>

Quotes from: Northwest turnarounds: How five schools made big jumps in student achievement. (2009) NWREL. Vol. 14, No. 3. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/14-03/>



# Influencing for Results

## Impact and Influence

- Influence the perceptions, thinking and actions of others to help the organization get better results
- Get the support of key influencers

## Team Leadership

- Work through others to influence opinion and get things done
- Build and manage effective teams

## Developing Others

- Increase the effectiveness of other people



# Influencing for Results

O'Neill gives a lot of credit to his administrative team, each of whom he says is “unbelievable” at taking a program and running with it. For example, O'Neill says he hasn't needed to attend an advisory committee meeting since 2004, when the program started.<sup>3</sup>

The assistant principals appreciate the respect, stressing that O'Neill invites and uses their input on decisions large and small.<sup>4</sup>

Quotes from: Northwest turnarounds: How five schools made big jumps in student achievement. (2009) NWREL. Vol. 14, No. 3. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/14-03/>



# Problem Solving

## Analytical Thinking

- Analyze multiple data sources and determine what is important and how it relates to achieving goals
- Make plans that logically and sequentially deploy significant resources and involve large numbers of people

## Conceptual Thinking

- Identify critical issues and communicate them clearly to all stakeholders
- Connect desired changes in actions to the learning results needed



# Problem Solving

Assistant Principal Jerry Fitzpatrick who's been at the school for 20 years, says it was O'Neill's ability to focus the entire building on student achievement, while not getting overwhelmed by the details. "He can maintain his focus regardless of everything going on in this crazy environment."

In the end, two major themes emerged: the correlation between poor reading and math skills and academic failure and the fact that many students felt "like a number" at the school. "You have to prioritize," says O'Neill. "You have to identify the most pressing needs first, and then put your entire focus on addressing them."

Quotes from: Northwest turnarounds: How five schools made big jumps in student achievement. (2009) NWREL. Vol. 14, No. 3. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/14-03>



# Showing Confidence to Lead

## Self-Confidence

- Strongly believe that he or she can get needed results
- Take significant risks to achieve success
- Take responsibility for both successes and failures
- Follow up on mistakes with analysis and corrective action



# Showing Confidence to Lead

Before the visit was over, Musser had decided to offer O'Neill the job, but he wanted to be sure his own high expectations were completely out on the table. "Can you turn our school into a high-performing school, as you've done here?" Musser remembers asking O'Neill. "I guarantee it," O'Neill responded, not missing a beat.<sup>7</sup>

Quotes from: Northwest turnarounds: How five schools made big jumps in student achievement. (2009) NWREL. Vol. 14, No. 3. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/14-03>





# How are Competencies Useful?

Best for...

- Selection
- Difficult to train for highest levels of competencies

Can also  
be used  
for...

- Recruitment
- Development and Training
- Evaluation



# Turnaround Leader Competencies

Attributes to consider.....

## Competencies

- Driving for results
- Influencing for results
- Problem solving
- Showing confidence to lead

## Knowledge & Skills

- Instructional knowledge and leadership
- Operational leadership
- Resource management

## Background

- Prior experience
- Preparation or source (e.g., traditional or alternate routes)
- Degrees and certification



# Turnaround Leader Competencies

## Finding the best fit.....

Best Fit	Next Best Fit	Possible Fit	Not a Good Fit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Previous experience as successful leader of a school turnaround</li><li>• During BEI interview, scores at high level on key turnaround competencies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During BEI interview, scores at high level on key turnaround competencies</li><li>• Previous experience as an effective principal or teacher</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During BEI interview, scores at high level on key turnaround competencies</li><li>• Previous experience with successful turnaround</li><li>• Limited/no educational experience (will need training).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive education experience</li><li>• During BEI interview, scores at <i>low</i> level on key turnaround competencies</li></ul>



# Example: Achievement

**Achievement: The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.**

## **Level 1. Low Concern for Work or Quality**

- Shows little concern for quality of work.
- Or expresses concern but not able to describe specific actions taken to do good work.

## **Level 2. Moderate Concern for Work and Quality**

- Works to meet explicit standards required by others.
- Or sets own standard for work quality, but not a very difficult or clear standard.
- Or improves own work or work of team, but not in pursuit of a specific goal.

## **Level 3. Strong Concern for Work Goals and Quality Improvement**

- Sets challenging work goals for self (and/or team) and acts to meet them.
- Or sets challenging goals for self (and/or team) and tracks and touts progress.

## **Level 4. Prioritizes Goals and Tasks Based on Cost-Benefit**

- Carefully chooses challenging goals and actions (for self and others) based on cost-benefit analysis, such as time, money and other resources needed versus likely speed and magnitude of results.

## **Level 5. Pursuit of High-Risk Goals and Improvement**

- Takes significant personal or career risk or commits significant resources (time, money, etc.) to launch a new venture or attempt an unlikely change/improvement, and
- Takes multiple actions to minimize risk and ensure success (conduct research, anticipate barriers, plan carefully ahead, etc.), and
- Acts to engage the efforts of others for success.

## **Level 6. Persistent Pursuit of High-Risk Goals and Improvement**

- Sustains pursuit of Level 6 over time to ensure complete meeting of high-risk goals.

\*Competencies selected from Spencer & Spencer, *Competence at Work*



# Final Considerations

Turnarounds are possible

Successful turnaround leaders engage in specific actions in an environment that supports radical change

Leader actions are more likely when leaders demonstrate high levels of particular competencies

Policymakers committed to successful turnarounds should integrate tools to identify competencies into hiring processes



# Turnaround Leader Competency List and Definitions

**Driving for Results Cluster** – These enable a relentless focus on learning results.

- ☐ **Achievement:** The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.
- ☐ **Initiative and Persistence:** The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.
- ☐ **Monitoring and Directiveness:** The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.
- ☐ **Planning Ahead:** A bias towards planning in order to derive future benefits or to avoid problems.

**Influencing for Results Cluster** – These enable working through and with others.

- ☐ **Impact and Influence:** Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others.
- ☐ **Team Leadership:** Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.
- ☐ **Developing Others:** Influence with the specific intent to increase the short and long-term effectiveness of another person.

**Problem Solving Cluster** – These enable solving and simplifying complex problems.

- ☐ **Analytical Thinking:** The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.
- ☐ **Conceptual Thinking:** The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things.

**Showing Confidence to Lead** – This competency is concerned with staying focused, committed, and self-assured.

- ☐ **Self-Confidence:** A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.

\*Competencies selected from Spencer & Spencer, *Competence at Work*



# Resources

- School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success. <http://www.publicimpact.com/act-strategically-when-schools-fail/competencies-for-turnaround-success>
- School Turnaround Leaders: Selection Toolkit.  
[http://www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/publicimpact/documents/Turnaround Leader Selection Toolkit.pdf](http://www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/publicimpact/documents/Turnaround_Leader_Selection_Toolkit.pdf)
- Additional Public Impact resources on turning around failing schools: [www.schoolturnarounds.org](http://www.schoolturnarounds.org)
- *Competence at Work*, Spencer and Spencer (1993)
- Northwest turnarounds: How five schools made big jumps in student achievement. (2009) NWREL. Vol. 14, No. 3. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/14-03/>
- *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement* (2007). CII. [www.centerii.org/restructuring/resources/turnarounds.html](http://www.centerii.org/restructuring/resources/turnarounds.html)
- *School Turnarounds: Actions And Results*. (2008) CII.  
[www.centerii.org/restructuring/resources/turnarounds.html](http://www.centerii.org/restructuring/resources/turnarounds.html)
- *Try, Try, Again: How to Triple The Number of Fixed Failing Schools Without Getting Any Better at Fixing Schools*: <http://www.publicimpact.com/try-try-again/>



# Further Questions....

Lucy Steiner  
Senior Consultant  
Public Impact  
919.537-8517

[Lucy\\_Steiner@publicimpact.com](mailto:Lucy_Steiner@publicimpact.com)



# Questions?



To submit a question to the moderator and presenter, click on the Questions link in the upper right hand corner.

---

# Thank you for participating.

- We look forward to your participation in future webinars hosted by the National Charter School Resource Center.
- This webinar will be archived online at the following website:  
<http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/events>  
(Click on past events, on the left.)
- Please share your feedback with us through the evaluation.